

**BASIC KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES OF ESP STUDENTS TO  
WORLD ENGLISHES**  
*Pengetahuan Dasar dan Sikap Mahasiswa ESP terhadap World Englishes*

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**ABSTRACT**

*The English for Specific Purposes (ESP) enterprise is protean and comprises three realms of language, pedagogy and content studies. Since it not only focuses on content-based, the responsive nature of ESP should also spotlight the development of language as well as pedagogy. World Englishes (WEs) as consistently growth in ELT practice, has confirmed its position due to the shift paradigm of teaching 'only' native standard Englishes. This paper starts with outlining why WEs should be introduced in ESP classrooms. Later, the paper reports research findings on the students' knowledge of WEs based on the proposals of Kirkpatrick and Kachru. It also explores the ESP students' attitudes toward WEs. The ESP students' basic knowledge and some future constructs to instill WEs concept for ESP students will conclude this preliminary study.*

**Keywords:** *basic knowledge, attitudes, ESP, World Englishes (WEs)*

In Indonesia, the concept of World Englishes (WEs) is growing in an organic way. This is evident from the wide-spreading World Englishes (WEs) which is now acknowledged and disseminated through education institutions. Due to the expanding WEs concept, there is a shift paradigm in teaching English which also follows. The growth inevitably impinges on the course design of English Language Teaching creating a steady flow of new ideas and programs (Sakai, S & D'Angelo, F.D, 2005: 323).

The reasons of the emerging WEs, in a similar vein, also become the reason why this preliminary study is worth conducting. With regard to the distinction between global and local sense of using English, McKay (2009:12) suggests some revisions concerning English as an international language and culture. Like as an international language, the use of English is no longer connected to the culture of the Inner Circle countries and English becomes embedded in the culture of the country in which it is learned and used. Even if we assume that English is the dominant mode of communication in such professional contexts, it is still not true that all interactants need to be governed by a set of uniform native standards (Bhatia, 1997). Gilsdorf (2002), on the other hand, views that English is alive,



healthy, and “morphing” in many ways, and what we call Standard English is a moving target.

ESP as a major activity around the world today is involving education, training and practice (Robinson, 1991: 1), inexorably should also follow the trend of which English is no longer seen from native standards glasses. Robinson further states that whether an ESP course contains a conscious focus on language or not, the course designers must be operating some sort of theory of language and of its relationship to ESP. Maasum (2011) who investigated the role of general background in the success of ESP courses in Iranian Universities contends that course designers and material developers should give up their old tradition of ‘being just specific to teach specific’ and that they can accommodate more GE especially at earlier stages. He further explains if they may define a threshold level of GE upon which an ESP course could be built. The writer believes if (at least) the general knowledge of WEs, with accordance to the pressing needs of WEs recognition, is hence essential to insert in the ESP course scheme.

In a number of contexts globally, the dividing lines between Outer Circle and Expanding Circle contexts have become blurred for a variety of social and historical reasons (Bolton, 2012). By the same token, Berns (2005) argues if users of Expanding Circles varieties are coming closer to acceptance of their rights to be linguistic deviants. Based on the putative observation, it is agreed that many professional workers from Indonesia work in the neighbor countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and so forth. Since one of the goals of ESP is to equip the learners to be able to communicate effectively, the writer considers if the students of ESP should have known WEs before they come in contact with people in the work field. It is the task of those involved in teachers’ professional development to raise the awareness of language teachers about the possible sources of confusion in our shared professional language (Lovtsevich, 2005). In Singapore, for instance, the neighbor of Indonesia and one of the main destination countries for Indonesian workers undergo competing norms (Pakir, 1998) in Singapore English. Hence, the students of ESP should aware with this phenomenon.



While the rationales of why WEs is better to be introduced to the ESP students is persuasive, it is truism if in the level of praxis, WEs has not yet championed over the “long tradition” of teaching English native standards. The practice of English teaching seems undermining the internal variety and other aspects of variability of English (Kachru, 1992) that are the variability in relation to the language acquisition, the variability in relation to the function and purpose, and the variability in relation to the context and situation. Varieties of English are still not adequately represented in current ELT (Bieswanger, 2008). This becomes challenge for ESP due to the teaching of WEs even in the ELT in general has not been satisfactory.

The explanations above demonstrate objective arguments confirming if WEs is supposedly introduced in ESP classrooms. This study is conducted generated from the postulation if all users of English, no matter which Circle they come from, have to develop sensitivity to more than one variety of English. (Kachru & Smith, 2008: 182). For this purpose, this preliminary study ask the following questions: (1) to what extent the basic knowledge of ESP students about World Englishes? We pursue this objective by asking the classification of different types of varieties from two perspectives: (a) types of varieties according to Kirkpatrick (English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL)) and (b) the countries which uses different varieties based on Kachru’s three concentric circles. (2) How are the students’ attitudes toward WEs.

## **METHOD**

In this preliminary study, a questionnaire was employed and examined with a descriptive qualitative design. It involved 51 students of ESP classes, studying at Muhammadiyah University Malang, East Java Province, Indonesia. The respondents of the study have been studying ESP for 9 months and were taken from two different classes of two different majors, Law and Civil Engineering Departments. The students were classified into 34 males and 17 female in the last semester studying ESP.

The questionnaire was given to the respondents comprising 3 different questions (*see Appendix*). The first item asked about the classification of different



types of varieties according to Kirkpatrick (2007), in which the varieties are divided into three terms: English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The respondents were asked to answer whether they know the meaning of each term. Should they know the answer of the term, they should provide a brief explanation.

The second item was in the form of multiple-choice questions. This item asked the classification of varieties based on Kachru's circle; those are Inner Circle, Outer Circle and Expanding Circle. Each circle was represented with 4 different countries and respondents had to decide which countries suited to the question. Inner circle was associated with countries using English as ENL, Outer Circle was associated with countries using English as ESL and Expanding Circle was associated with countries using English as EFL. Because this item, like mentioned before, was closely related to the item 1, it is noteworthy that before answering the second item, the students were told not to revise their previous answers in item 1. The respondents were given some overview of WEs without mentioning which countries that use English as ENL, ESL and EFL. This was done because the researcher realized if the ultimate goal of questions in item 2 was aimed at classifying countries based on the concentric circle, therefore, some basic knowledge of WEs were considered need to be explained briefly beforehand.

To see the students' attitudes toward WEs, the students were asked to give their opinion on WEs and its relation to the ESP class. There were 3 questions and the respondents needed to state their opinion, given in the Likert Scale. They should state their opinions whether WEs is worth-teaching, whether it is needed and whether it can help learners to learn ESP better. Like item 2, these types of data were analyzed and presented in (*f*) and in (%). The data elicited from the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively to see the frequency (*f*) as well as the percentage (%) of true and false answers.



## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Students' basic knowledge of types of English varieties**

The three questions in the first item inquired the students to display their basic knowledge of different types of varieties developed by Kirckpatrick (2007) about their understanding of what ENL, ESL, and EFL mean. Should they answer 'yes', they had to explain briefly about those three terms. Out of 51 respondents, there are 13 (25.49 %) of students who answered yes to the all three questions. However, surprisingly, none of them could answer all three questions correctly. We may see the respondents' answers about their understanding of EFL first, since it produced the most frequent misleading conception. Many of the students' answers simply assert that EFL is the opposite of national language. Their concept of "foreign" is somewhat simplistic yet inadequate.

English as a Second Language was also conjectured naively, seen from the students responses. Most of the answers (5) out of 13 yes responses show that the term of second language was merely a language used after the first language. However, none of them elaborated either what "second" or "first" mean in the language context. For the first question, despite only 3 responses were proper in explaining what ENL mean, but those responses were not falsely stated by the respondents. The three respondents showed if what they understand about ENL is, when English is used in daily communicative interaction as the first language or mother tongue.

Given the data above, it is important to note if almost all students are not knowledgeable of these very basic terms in WEs. The question whether it is necessary to recognize these terms might follow. However, this result might be the springboard to predict sketchily the WEs-related general knowledge. The inability to make such discrepancy of different uses of English to some extent gives us an illustration of how the WEs-related general knowledge has never been provided in ESP classrooms.



### Students' basic knowledge of Kachru's 'Polymodel' English circle

The students' basic knowledge of Kachru's circle can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1** The Students' Basic Knowledge of Kachru's Circle (N = 51)

Questions	True		False	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%
Inner Circle: which of the following countries that use English as a Native Language?	45	88.23	6	11.76
Outer Circle: which of the following countries that use English as a Second Language?	41	80.39	10	19.60
Expanding Circle: which of the following countries that use English as a Foreign Language?	48	94.11	3	5.88

The data from the Table 1 shows that, in general, the students are able to answer almost all questions correctly. The question about Expanding circle's countries was almost answered correctly from the total number of the students (94.11 %). Moreover, the questions about the Inner Circle's countries were responded (88.23 %) correctly from the students. In addition, there are 41 students (80.39 %) answered correctly related to the question about Expanding Circle's countries.

The students seem aware of recognizing which countries use English as a foreign language. This is interesting, because for this Expanding Circle question, the researcher included Indonesia—the home country of the students, as a one of the lists in the option. Without having prior knowledge about this concentric circle, they were able to make assumption and to decide correctly whether in Indonesian context, English is used as an EFL. The question related to the Inner Circle's is the next question that got many correct responses from the students. Most of them are able to recognize four (Canada, New Zealand, UK, and Australia) out of five countries in Inner circle proposed by Kachru (2005). The students mostly seem able to see the existence of some popular countries, e.g. UK and Australia, which use English as a Native Language. Furthermore, the question about the Outer Circle's countries got the lowest correct answer out of three questions (41). However, the percentage of students' correct answer was relatively high (80.39 %). There are two



possibilities to explain this. Firstly, it might be because the question of this concentric circle consists only three questions, and two of the questions got the highest frequencies (48 and 45 students) which likely to have only a small difference of number, the question that more likely to suffer from lowest score is obviously the question item number 2. The Second, the students are probably still confused with the concept of English as a Second Language and which countries those employ it. Generally speaking, in Indonesia, the use of terms “First and Second language” are not frequent. Since Indonesia has many local languages, most of the people are aware with the term “traditional languages” as well as “national language”. The former refers to mother tongue language and the later refers to Indonesian Language as a *lingua franca*; English itself, in Indonesian context, is perceived as a foreign language.

It is interesting to note that although the researcher only introduced the students with a glance overview of WEs before filling the questionnaire, the students have almost no basic knowledge (indicated by the results in the previous section) about ENL, ESL and EFL, they seem able to make discrepancy of which countries use English as ENL, ESL or EFL in Kachru’s Circle.

### Students’ Attitudes toward World Englishes

The students’ attitudes toward World Englishes can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2** Students’ Attitudes toward World Englishes (N = 51)

Question items	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
ESP should accommodate World Englishes	17	33.33	27	52.94	2	3.92	3	5.88	2	3.92
World Englishes are important to master ESP	20	39.21	24	47.05	4	7.84	3	5.88	0	0
Students will learn better if they know World Englishes	14	27.45	27	52.94	5	9.80	5	9.80	0	0

The data from the Table 2 shows that most of the students have positive attitudes toward WEs. From three questions, the majority of the students’ responses





are either Strongly Agree or Agree. The question item 1 which ask about whether ESP classrooms should accommodate WEs, shows that (52.94 %) of students agree and (33.33 %) of students strongly agree with the accommodation. However, we can also see that (3.92 %) of students chose strongly disagree with such accommodation.

The next question is related to the importance of WEs knowledge to master ESP. Like in previous question, the students mostly chose agree (47.05 %) and is followed by (39.21 %) of students who chose strongly agree with the statement. None of students chose strongly disagrees, but some (5.88 %) chose disagree. The last question is concerning with the importance of WEs in their better understanding of ESP. For a second time, like in two preceding items, most of them strongly agree (52.94 %) and is followed by those who chose agree (27.45 %).

Given the data, it can be concluded that students of ESP somehow “expect” to learn or at least to know several English languages varieties. After collecting the answers from the students, the researcher saw if many students stated either agree or strongly agree. This arouses the curiosity of the researcher and hence, the researcher asked some of the students orally with respect to the reason behind their answers after the questionnaires collection. It is found that what they expect after graduating from university is to get opportunities to have international career. One of the Law students, for example, said that if he wants to work in the United Nations and therefore, he needs to know WEs to communicate effectively with many people. He needs to be well-equipped for his future career and expects to be strengthening his knowledge of English with WEs. The other argument was from the student of Civil Engineering Department that also underlies the same motive regarding why she wants to study WEs. She contended if the possibilities to work in international sphere are getting bigger from time to time. She said, if she meets clients from various foreign countries, for example, the knowledge of WEs is needed, because the clients of course do not come only from Inner Circle Countries.

English teachers to respond to learners’ linguistic needs for international communication (Mukminatien, 2012) should accommodate WEs. She further





explained if teachers should adjust their current practices through the inclusion of varieties of WEs in developing learners' oral communication. It implies if we have to acknowledge the urgency of WEs, particularly in oral mode. This is in line with the students responses regarding their expectation to be able to communicate with international colleagues. Apparently, this becomes their reason to agree upon the statement whether WEs is important to master ESP. The association of WEs and ESP is always connected to the oral communication skill. Moreover the respondents mostly either agree or strongly agree if WEs can help them to learn ESP better. And this is also always associated with the oral communication that positive attitude will boost their acquisition toward the target language (Arnold and Brown, 1999; Brown, 2007). However, this may be defective of the data since ESP does not comprise only oral, but also the other skills.

### **ESP beyond classrooms**

It cannot be neglected if the purpose of studying ESP is to provide students English competence required in workplaces. In Indonesia context, for example, mastering English enables the candidates to have cross-cultural awareness and greater chances to compete in the global market (Harwati, 2011). The greater chances to work in international workplace or to have a good deal of interaction with foreign English speakers are even more possible due to the economic strength of Indonesia. As a logical consequence, the demand of being intelligible in international communication warrants more attention from ESP practitioners.

Furthermore, in the context of ASEAN, according to Kirkpatrick (2007), the role of English is de-facto lingua franca. He also contends in ASEAN context, learners need an ELT curriculum that teaches them about cultures of the people they are most likely to be using English with, and how to compare, relate and present their own culture to others. If ESP learners want to get involved, at least, for example in ASEAN context, they need to be aware with the varieties of English. We may see several ASEAN countries (Singapore, Malaysia and The Philippines) in which use English as a Second Language and hence, to some extent, they have some English varieties.



ESP classrooms should see the fact that we need to compromise the shifts. What worth teaching is not only American-British oriented, or in other words, Inner Circle oriented. Matsuda (2003) affirms that it is necessary to accept multiple varieties of English, and therefore, ELT should be matched with pedagogical approaches. The practice of English teaching, eventually, need to be revisited in a sense that intelligibility in communication among English speakers becomes the paramount goal instead of near native competence goal—as reflected from Inner Circle orientation. ESP classrooms should see the goal of teaching practice beyond here-and-now and project future possibilities of the learners to work in the more complex language varieties landscapes.

### **CONCLUSION**

This preliminary study shows some basic knowledge of WEs of the students of ESP based on the classification proposed by Kirckpartick and Kachru. The classification of varieties in English, to some extent, has not been discussed in ESP classrooms. While in futuristic terms, judging from the current trends, one could conclude that WEs will continue to flourish and that innovations and creative impulses will come more from the Outer and Expanding Circles than from the Inner Circle (Kachru and Smith, 2009), the paradigm in teaching ESP should, however, accommodate the WEs to compromise with the pressing needs of communication. What students need is at least, recognizing the general WEs-related knowledge, so that they can discover more about WEs autonomously. ESP students, however could categorize the countries in concentric circles, indicating if basically they have seen the different use of Englishes, but since they are not well-informed, the recognition of WEs appear to be impoverished.

In terms of the attitudes, the positive responses from the ESP students intriguing some future constructs to include WEs in ESP classrooms. The future orientation of working in international sphere as well as communicating with foreign colleagues is the paramount reason why WEs is indispensable. The trajectory of ESP has to foresee the growing WEs and instill some underlying features of WEs in ESP pedagogical context.



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